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[Feds hunt for asbestos at site of General Industries fire](#)

Lisa Roberson

ELYRIA — Wearing white hazardous material jumpsuits and breathing respirators, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-hired contractors sifted through dirt and debris at the former General Industries site last week.

Their goal? Determine just how contaminated the two-block site may be with asbestos, said Jim Augustyn, a spokesman for the U.S. EPA.

Property owner John Peshek does not believe asbestos is throughout the property, and that sentiment prompted the U.S. EPA to send in their own investigators for site sampling, Augustyn said.

“Mr. Peshek has made several statements that the bricks were not contaminated, and site sampling will provide us

with more information to refine estimates on cleaning up the property," he said.



An investigator searches through the rubble at the former General Industries site on Thursday. (Photo by Bruce Bishop, The Chronicle-Telegram.)

The 200 samples being collected across the property are the first samples taken by the U.S. EPA. Since the July 2008 fire, the Ohio EPA has led the efforts to get the property cleaned up. The state agency was the first to test for and find asbestos contamination on the site less than two weeks after the July 3 fire.

Since then, movement has been restricted on the entire property.

"The U.S. EPA got on board in May because Mr. Peshek hasn't made a great deal of progress on cleaning up the property," Augustyn said.

"The problem we are facing with Mr. Peshek is he wants to do the cleanup, but he doesn't have the financial assets to do the cleanup. So until he can find suitable finances, the U.S. EPA is moving forward with preparing to do the cleanup ourselves."

Peshek as recently as July vowed to clean up the site with his own money. He has said he had no insurance to cover such costs.

The former factory is at the corner of Olive and Taylor streets. It once was a complex of roughly 10 buildings that spanned three city blocks.

Peshek used about 25 percent of the space to operate his custom plastics and fiberglass manufacturing plant.

Sampling suspect material — roofing material, floor tiles and insulation — is the first step toward getting the U.S. EPA to do the cleanup. Augustyn hopes to have sampling complete by midweek and results back in two weeks.

In the meantime, Augustyn said residents in the immediate area should not fear for their health. The contractors are only wearing masks and suits because they are walking through the debris, possibly stirring up asbestos fibers.

Also, he said, the federal EPA only uses contractors certified in asbestos handling and removal and those who know how to safe guard the public from their work.

Mike Settles, spokesman for the Ohio EPA, said site inspectors continue their weekly inspections of the site looking for visible asbestos emissions and so far have found none.

Contact Lisa Roberson at 329-7121 or lroberson@chronicle.com.


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3 Responses to "Feds hunt for asbestos at site of General Industries fire"

1.  [ElyriaDeservesBetter](#) says:
[September 15, 2009 at 6:09 am](#)

"In the meantime, Augustyn said residents in the immediate area should not fear for their health. The contractors are only wearing masks and suits because they are walking though the debris, possibly stirring up asbestos fibers." This guy is kidding right? You know those really windy, gusty days that bring down tree limbs? How about that Mr. Augustyn? Any chance that they could stir up some asbestos and throw them into the air? Should be very interesting to hear the results from the U.S. EPA, if we ever get to. Thanks again for putting us all at risk. Way to mandate a sprinkler system E-town. You know those lawyer ads for Mesothelioma? Keep that # handy folks.


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2.  [Eatown](#) says:
[September 15, 2009 at 8:14 am](#)

this guy ran his own business out of the building but didnt have insurance on the buidling? how convenient dontya think?

"Peshek used about 25 percent of the space to operate his custom plastics and fiberglass manufacturing plant."

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3.  [Eatown](#) says:
[September 15, 2009 at 9:18 pm](#)

ya know if the epa is walkin around in white suits and breathing things; its not good for the poeple living near it.

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